


**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RURAL EXTENSION IN THE BRAZIL WITHOUT POVERTY PROGRAM. A REPORT ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF CAXIAS/MA** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.037-078>**Ney Jefferson Pereira Teixeira<sup>1</sup> and Laerte Fedrigo<sup>2</sup>.****ABSTRACT**

The present study intends to contribute to the production of knowledge about PATER in the PBSM from the report of the experience of the Municipality of Caxias/MA. The first chapter analyzes the process of expansion of Rural Extension in Brazil, the main institutional changes that have occurred over the last four decades, the process of social mobilization that enabled the formulation of a new proposal for Rural Extension, as well as the conceptual bases that support the new PNATER for family farmers from the implementation of PBSM and PFAPR. The second chapter addresses the socioeconomic characteristics of the benefited families, the guidelines and objectives of the implementation and execution of the PATER, the structures of coordination, execution and social participation and the activities carried out in the proposed period. In the third chapter, the results of the Program are evaluated, according to the view of the technicians of the executing entity and the benefited families in the Municipality of Caxias/MA. The PATER, associated with a set of public policies, connected by it, has the power to lead families to the reduction of significant dimensions of poverty by overcoming indicators of deprivation, as evidenced. When outlining the visible limits of this public policy to lead the families involved to overcome the conditions that generate extreme poverty, it is necessary to consider its achievements in just two and a half years of execution and its potential for qualification in the face of the demand for continuity and deepening.

**Keywords:** Technical Assistance. Rural Extension. Productive Inclusion. Development. Municipality of Caxias/MA.

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## INTRODUCTION

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed significant advances in the reduction of poverty and extreme poverty in Brazil, according to data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2017). However, persistent inequality, especially in rural areas, keeps the country among the most unequal in the world, with millions of people still immersed in poverty. This reality highlights the need for social policies that transcend mere welfare, demanding deeper structural reforms to combat the roots of poverty.

Faced with this scenario, the Federal Government launched in 2011 the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty Plan (PBSM), with the objective of consolidating advances in the fight against poverty and extreme poverty. The Program for the Promotion of Rural Productive Activities (PFAPR), aimed at family farmers in situations of extreme poverty, and the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Program (PATER) emerged as crucial instruments of the PBSM. PATER, in particular, proposes to offer technical assistance and non-reimbursable financial resources to promote food security, productive inclusion, and the strengthening of the autonomy and citizenship of beneficiaries.

Understanding the conception, potential and limits of this public policy is fundamental, considering the historical context of poverty in Brazil and the complexity of the Brazilian social protection system. Poverty is not configured as a fortuitous event, but rather as an intrinsic element in the country's history, demanding approaches that go beyond welfare. The PATER, inserted in this context, raises questions about its effectiveness in overcoming extreme rural poverty, or whether its action is limited to mitigating this condition.

The present study used elements generated by the execution of the PATER in the TCC/MA. The study was deepened in the city of Caxias/MA. In addition to the researcher's experience in the region, this municipality was chosen because it has the highest proportion of families in extreme poverty in the rural area of the TCC/MA. The evaluation of the legacy of the Program was carried out by consulting and analyzing secondary data and various information collected and made available by the executing entity and primary data collected through a form addressed to 39 beneficiary families and the executing team of PATER. From the analysis of secondary data, information from the executing entity and primary data collected through questionnaires and interviews with beneficiaries and rural extension workers, we seek to answer the following question: the PATER, as a complementary public policy to the Bolsa Família Program (PBF), has the potential to lead families to overcome extreme rural poverty, or is it limited to an important one, but insufficient, mitigation policy?



The investigation, conducted under an interpretative approach of public policy analysis, aims to understand the perception of rural extension workers and beneficiary families about the program, as well as the results achieved. Through the analysis of the information collected and its confrontation with the theoretical framework, it seeks to contribute to the production of knowledge about PATER and its implications for inclusive rural development. The results of this study may support future actions and public policies aimed at overcoming extreme poverty in rural areas, in addition to fostering the debate on the role of rural extension in this process.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Primary data were used, collected through a form addressed to 39 beneficiary families and the PATER execution team, and secondary data, generated and made available by GRAPAS, as well as various information collected from workshops, evaluation seminars, reports and published documents. Such data are systematized, analyzed and compared with the theoretical framework and with other reflections carried out with a focus on actions to confront the issue of rural poverty.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **THE COACHES' PERCEPTION OF THE PATER**

The first issue addressed refers to the motivation and knowledge that the team and the executing entity had at the beginning and end of the PATER. As can be seen in *Table 1*, their motivation changed positively, from 76.2% to 92.5%. When assessing the knowledge of the reality of families in situations of extreme poverty and the relationship of the executing entity itself, it is perceived that initially there was a low relationship between the executing entity and the families and that the level of knowledge of the professionals about this reality was low. If initially only 22.4% of the professionals had high knowledge of this reality, in the end this knowledge reached 98.5% of the professionals. This fact is possibly related to the training developed by the MDA and the MDS, in partnership with GRAPAS.



Table 1 - Motivation and knowledge of the reality by the professionals involved, at the beginning and end of the PATER

Escala	Motivação Profissional (%)		Relação inicial da executora com as famílias (%)	Conhecimento da realidade (%)	
	Início execução	Final Execução		Início execução	Final Execução
Baixa	3,0	4,5	59,1	61,2	0,0
Regular	20,9	3,0	21,2	16,4	1,5
Alta	76,2	92,5	19,7	22,4	98,5

Source: From the author (2017).

When analyzing the perception manifested by the executing team about the scope of PATER regarding food production, 98.5% of the professionals showed that the results achieved in terms of food security of the families involved were high, as can be seen in *Table 2*. In terms of income generation, the scope of the Program was more restricted<sup>3</sup> for 44.8% of the professionals, the impact of the projects developed on income was considered low or regular, while for 55.2% of the professionals it was considered high. This reading is understood as natural, given the limited resources of the Program as a power to structure agricultural or non-agricultural productive activities that can immediately impact the income generation of families that often present situations of isolation or scarcity of land. It must be considered in the time frame of two and a half years analyzed, that the operational dynamics of PATER allowed the implementation of productive projects to occur only from the beginning of the second year.

Practically all the technicians indicated that there was a positive impact of PATER on the citizenship of the families involved. A question was also asked about the level of empowerment of<sup>4</sup> these families with their communities, leaders, institutional and representative spaces and the ATER agents themselves. As shown in *Table 9*, for 56.7% of the respondents, the empowerment of families was initially considered low. In turn, the empowerment that was initially considered high for only 13.4% of the respondents increased to 83.6% at the end of the two and a half years of implementation of the Program<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> This is an indirect perception, that is, as food production has improved, the money previously spent on the purchase of these goods has been used to buy other things.

<sup>4</sup> In Freire's perspective, empowerment, based on a critical perception of social reality, is fundamental, but such learning needs to be related to the broader transformation of society. From this perspective, empowerment can be conceived as emerging from a process of social action in which individuals take possession of their own lives through interaction with other individuals, generating critical thinking in relation to reality, favoring the construction of personal and social capacity and enabling the transformation of social power relations (BAQUERO, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> In a reading of rural extension, as an educational process of a continuous non-formal nature, it would be interesting to quantify how much the methodological and pedagogical contribution enunciated by the executing entity and its professionals through its mission, was decisive for this perception to materialize.



Table 2 - Perception of the local executing team about the scope of PATER in terms of income generation, food security, citizenship and empowerment of families

Escala	Alcance do PATER (%)			Empoderamento das famílias (%)	
	Geração de Renda	Segurança alimentar	Cidadania	Início Execução	Final Execução
Baixa	7,5	0,0	0,0	56,7	3,0
Regular	37,3	1,5	3,0	29,9	13,4
Alta	55,2	98,5	97,0	13,4	83,6

Source: From the author (2017).

The data in *Table 3* allow us to assess the perception of the executors about the capacity of the productive projects elaborated to strengthen the reproduction strategies of the families involved and their probable impact on gender relations. In this perspective, for 82.8% of the respondents, the productive projects presented themselves with a high capacity to strengthen the social and economic reproduction strategies of the families involved, and 75.8% consider that the projects prepared and executed by the families will have continuity, reproducing themselves over time. This perception dialogues with the concern expressed by Rahnema (2003), who, when studying the production of poverty and misery generated by the economic system itself in comparison to the poverty of simple life societies, which organize themselves to meet their needs, ponders that many programs designed to account for this reality constitute a mere exercise of power and mitigation, often contributing to steal instruments patiently forged to meet their needs, such as the ability to self-defend and organize, which allowed them to resist adversity.

Table 3 - Perception of the local executing team about the profile of the productive project, its ability to continue and the importance of having been prepared on behalf of women

Escala	Capacidade do Projeto		Projeto em nome da mulher qualificou	
	Fortalecer estratégias (%)	Continuar (%)	Relações de gênero (%)	Execução (%)
Baixa	3,1	4,5	6,0	1,5
Regular	14,1	19,7	3,0	9,1
Alta	82,8	75,8	90,9	89,4

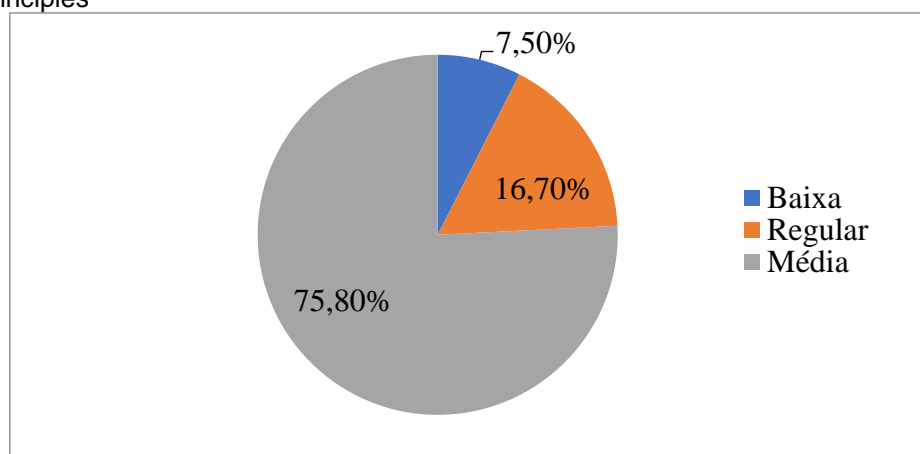
Source: From the author (2017).

However, given the purpose and limits of the present study, the effective politicization of individuals and groups in terms of citizenship proposed by Souza (2009), "who can overcome the precarious habitus", will be taken only through this indirect reading and, therefore, partial at some risk of overestimating advances at this level, highlighting that such reach has the potential to generate over time, effective and deeper changes in socially constructed reality.

Regarding the importance of the elaboration of the project and the release of resources having been carried out mostly in the name of the woman, holder of the BF, the data in *Table 3* indicate that for 90.9% of the respondents there is a high perception that this guideline strengthens women in gender relations in the rural environment<sup>6</sup>, while for 89.4%, Such referral qualified the execution of the productive project. This reading of the female empowerment in the gender relationship established within the UPF with the purpose of enabling the implementation of the productive project and in the community through participation in events and management of the resources received is in accordance with what Rego and Pinsani (2013) identified when analyzing the impacts of a decade of income transfer programs that have women as their centrality; that is, that there was a reduction in women's submission, an increase in autonomy and more freedom and independence linked to the possibilities of choice, given by the management of financial resources.

When asked at what level the profiles of the projects elaborated indicate the incorporation of the principles of agroecology, understood as a science that guides the adoption of ecologically-based practices, 75.8% of the respondents considered this perception to be high, as observed in *Graph 1*. This finding dialogues with initial data from the diagnosis elaborated, in which the main autonomy strategies adopted by families in situations of extreme rural poverty in Caxias/MA are presented, in terms of maintaining the biodiversity of plant and animal species under their domain.

Graph 1 - Perception of the local executing team about the profile of the productive projects when considering agroecology principles



Source: From the author (2017).

<sup>6</sup> This genre is understood here in the perspective proposed by authors such as Louro (1997) and Braga (2007). For these authors, biological difference is only the starting point for the social construction of what it is to be a man or a woman. Sex is attributed to the biological as a gender is a social and historical construction. The notion of gender points to the dimension of the social relations of the feminine and the masculine. Gender is the first field within which, or through which, power is articulated, so differences are socially constructed and are involved with power relations.



In general terms, an optimistic reading of the results of the PATER is perceived, given by the professionals involved in its execution. This dedication associated with daily monitoring allowed these professionals to perceive advances that will not necessarily be the same as those perceived by the families involved. Such perceptions inform us that the motivation of the professionals involved was increasing, that there was also a great deal of institutional learning about the phenomenon of poverty given the strategy of targeting this public policy. The data indicate that the axis of this inclusion route that advanced the most was food security, with significant achievements in terms of income generation for more than half of the families involved and that most of the productive projects developed strengthened their survival strategies with a high capacity for continuity and sustainability. In addition, the citizenship of the families involved was stimulated and, by prioritizing the ownership of the projects, it strengthened women in gender relations in the rural environment.

### PERCEPTION OF THE PATER GIVEN BY THE EVALUATION OF THE EXECUTING ENTITY

From the point of view of the evaluation carried out at the end of PATER, it is relevant to highlight the contributions offered through the participation of support professionals from the four administrative offices and the 17 municipalities present at the seminar held on December 2 and 3, 2015 in Caxias/MA. Such contributions, which took place in an institutional environment of favorable support, pointed to difficulties and learning that occurred during two and a half years of execution. Both the executing entity and its professionals at this time were at a new level, of greater complexity, which imposed the need to value the trajectory built with the families involved, in the perspective of contributing to the continuity and qualification of the public policy itself.

In this context, it is considered appropriate to present the learning recorded in this event from two tables. Taking into account the descriptive nature of this evaluation, it was limited to the synthesis of only ten lines per table, which in a way minimizes the richness of the work developed. This excerpt was elaborated from the set of slides presented by the technicians of the four administrative-operational offices of the executing entity, which were made available.

Chart 1 - Main operational difficulties identified by the municipal team in the execution of the PATER of Caxias/MA

Operational difficulty identified by municipal teams
Initial resistance from local managers.
Social isolation – difficulty in accessing properties.



Initial fear of families in losing BF.
Lack of initial motivation from families.
Lack of experience in developing similar projects.
Bureaucracy – slowness of the SIG@LIVRE and SIATER systems and excessive collection of signatures from families.
Lack of documentation of land ownership.
Properties with very small areas or unfavorable to the development of productive projects.
Payment of the resources of the production project on behalf of the holder of the DAP.
Excessive number of families per municipality with many activities to be developed/ATER

Source: Adapted from GRAPAS (2015, p. 40).

In this sense, *Chart 1* presents the main difficulties, indicating limits that result from the normativity of the policy itself, such as the excessive bureaucracy and control systems used that impact the operational routine of ATER, absorbing precious time of these professionals<sup>7</sup>. This issue was associated with a tight operational schedule that operated two programs simultaneously, with a number of families considered high for the reality of some municipalities which, associated with the geographical dispersion of these families, generated in many places an environment of work overload, especially where the team was small. This reality must be considered from a perspective of qualification and expansion of this partnership proposed by PBSM.

This set of difficulties, which were narrated with appropriation by those who experienced the execution of PATER, is not always adequately understood by those who are outside this level of involvement. Thus, quickly, based on the understanding extracted during the debate, reference is made to some notes, starting with the resistance of local managers, perceived at the beginning of the execution of the activities, resulting from the lack of knowledge of the Program and its purpose, which generated some discomfort with a potential shadowing of responsibilities of the structures responsible for mediating public policies aimed at this public. According to GRAPAS (2015) this issue was understood and overcome as the work progressed, given the understanding that the ATER action proposed in an innovative way by this articulation of two ministries proved to be increasingly correct and necessary in the perspective of socio-productive inclusion proposed by the Program.

The fear of losing the BF, given the intentionality of the development of productive projects with the objective of qualifying food production and income generation, also identified by other researchers who evaluated public income transfer policies, is easily understood, especially in those situations of high social vulnerability in which such resources are often the only source of family resources.

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<sup>7</sup> Data obtained from the report and the presentation of the final evaluation seminar, held on December 2 and 3, 2015, in Caxias/MA.





The heavy bureaucracy of the Program can also be easily understood when one realizes the existence of two computerized control systems that do not dialogue with each other and that require a high workload of professional time for double posting of data. The reference to excessive collection of signatures says more than the time needed to collect it in all actions performed for posting in the system. It also concerns a fragile initial relationship, an action that in many cases seemed to humiliate those who were illiterate or had precarious literacy, and the expansion of the set of activities provided for in PATER.

The last difficulty encountered, which seems to require some additional clarification, refers to those cases in which the entire articulation of the productive project was developed based on the mediation of the woman and the resource came out in the name of the husband or partner due to the control exercised by the MDS, which cross-referenced the couple's data with the Pronaf Declaration of Aptitude (DAP). This situation, which generated significant wear and tear, resulted from notes of some documentary non-conformity of the owners of the production unit, "but which was gradually adjusted following the release of the portions of the production project, leaving this sequel referred to that deserves adjustment in an expansion of PATER" (Interview with the Coordinator, 2017).

Chart 2 - Main lessons learned by the municipal team in the execution of PATER in Caxias/MA

<b>Learning pointed out by the municipal teams</b>
Knowledge of the challenging reality of this "new" Ater audience
Construction of a new perception of rural poverty and its structural causes
Adaptation of technical knowledge to the reality and expectations of families
It improved the integration between extension workers and knowledge about social protection rights and policies.
Intersectoriality and social integration – articulation between various local sectors (health, education, social assistance)
Prejudices were resolved – the public surprised us and many local managers.
Focusing the policy on the titular name BF stimulated the protagonism of women and young people
In the socialization of families – the right to speak, to be heard, to know experiences.
Improvements were made in production, food security and income with very little resources
Recognition and appreciation of ATER's work by families hitherto invisible

Source: Adapted from GRAPAS (2015, p. 41).

In turn, *Chart 2* presents the descriptive synthesis of the learning collected by the professionals and the executing entity<sup>8</sup>. In this narrative, the trajectory of the professionals associated with the development of PATER can be perceived, ranging from little initial knowledge of reality, qualification to understand it, interaction with families and local entities to build possible answers, recognition of the policy itself for the advances achieved and of the professionals of Ater for the families involved. Such a synthesis, not without reason,

<sup>8</sup> Data obtained from the report and the presentation of the final evaluation seminar, held on December 2 and 3, 2015, in Caxias/MA.



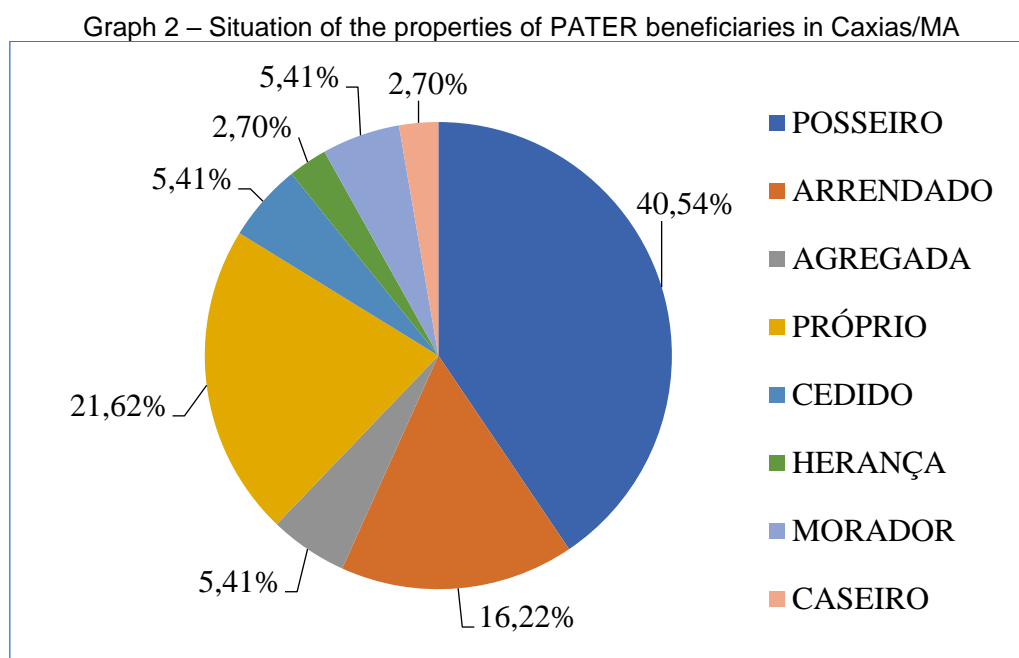
reaffirms in many aspects the perception of the professionals presented in the previous sub-item of this chapter regarding the knowledge of reality, adaptation of social technologies, integration between members of the multidisciplinary team, overcoming prejudices, focusing the project on behalf of the BF holder, expansion of citizenship through the visibility and socialization of families and, Scope of the program in terms of production, qualification of food security and income.

Still as a significant element that can be obtained from this summary table, two aspects should be highlighted. The first refers to the training process structured from the initial training developed by the MDA/MDS, which provided key elements for understanding the phenomenon of poverty. The second refers to the qualification of ATER's relations and the integrated action with the different sectors of the municipality, deepening the understanding of other social policies and developing network action. This movement, stimulated by the operational need to carry out PATER's actions, indicated a new level for ATER that is now understood in its planned and continued work, as a strategic participant in the network that operates local social policy, associating protective action with actions to promote opportunities in rural areas, with a view to overcoming poverty in its multiple dimensions.

### PERCEPTION OF FAMILIES BENEFITING FROM PATER

To assess to what extent the improvements identified through the narrative and evaluation conducted by the executors meant an effective movement to overcome the condition of extreme rural poverty, the sequence of this research is organized, seeking, from a case study, to listen directly to the voice of the social subjects who actively participated in PATER. Next, the data collected from the sample of 39 families of interviewees are presented, as well as their analysis, comparing with the theoretical contribution considered.

Regarding the families' perception of the impact of PATER, the primary data (from the field research) made available by GRAPAS (2015) were analyzed, considering a sample of 39 families interviewed, comparing them with the debate pertinent to the object of this research. Preliminarily, it is important to highlight that, of the total number of interviewees, 50.94% are men and 49.06% women; 3.70% are white, 5.19% are black, and 91.11% are brown or mulatto; 91.31% of the interviewees did not finish high school and 25.36% did not complete primary school; 10.14% are illiterate, 7.97% say they have completed high school and only 0.72% have incomplete higher education. Furthermore, as the data in *Graph 2* illustrate, 75.65% of the family farmers assisted by PATER do not own the land, 40.54% are in the condition of squatters and 5% in the situation of ceded properties.

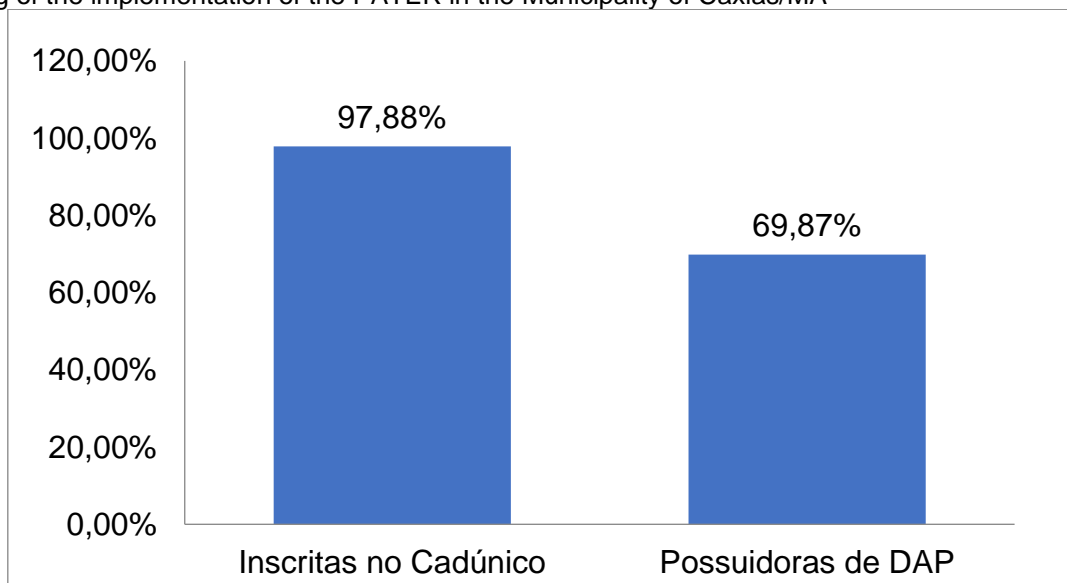


Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the GRAPAS field research (2015).

One of the first significant data identified from SIATER refers to the initial condition of families regarding enrollment in CadÚnico and the condition of having the Declaration of Aptitude for Pronaf (DAP). As can be seen in *Graph 3*, 97.88% of the families were enrolled in CadÚnico and 69.87% had DAP. As the prerequisites for access to PATER were to have a *per capita family income* of less than seventy reais, to be accredited in CadÚnico and to prove their condition as family farmers given by the possession of DAP, families with greater vulnerability in rural areas would not have been included in the Program, were it not for the active search strategy that brought 300 new families to CadÚnico and to the Program. This process, in addition to including families that were really on the margins of the community itself, also indicated the need for updating and registration qualification. From this

perspective, the indication of the need to qualify social control over the database for access to income transfer policies can be considered as an indirect legacy of PATER.

Graph 3 - Conditions of families regarding enrollment in the CadÚnico and possession of DAP at the beginning of the implementation of the PATER in the Municipality of Caxias/MA



Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the GRAPAS field research (2015).

The second issue highlighted in the evaluation conducted refers to the participation of family members in the productive projects elaborated, which shows that the dynamic involvement of the UPF was sought. Table 4 shows that the projects were prepared in the name of which members of the UPFs, showing once again that the strategy of prioritizing the release of resources in the name of the head of the BF, who is usually the woman, allowed her to have a hegemonic participation in the projects. As can be seen, 48.72% were prepared in the name of the family, 17.95% in the name of the woman, 7.69% in the name of the couple and 7.69% in the name of the woman and children, and only 17.95% of the productive projects were prepared in the name of the man and children.

Table 4 - Identification of family members in whose name the PATER production project was prepared

Membros da família	Participantes do projeto		
	(Nº)		(%)
Homem + Mulher + Filho(a)s	19		48,72
Mulher	7		17,95
Homem + Mulher	3		7,69
Mulher + Filho(a)s	3		7,69
Homem	6		15,38
Homem + Filho(a)s	1		2,56
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>		<b>100,00</b>

Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the GRAPAS field research (2015).

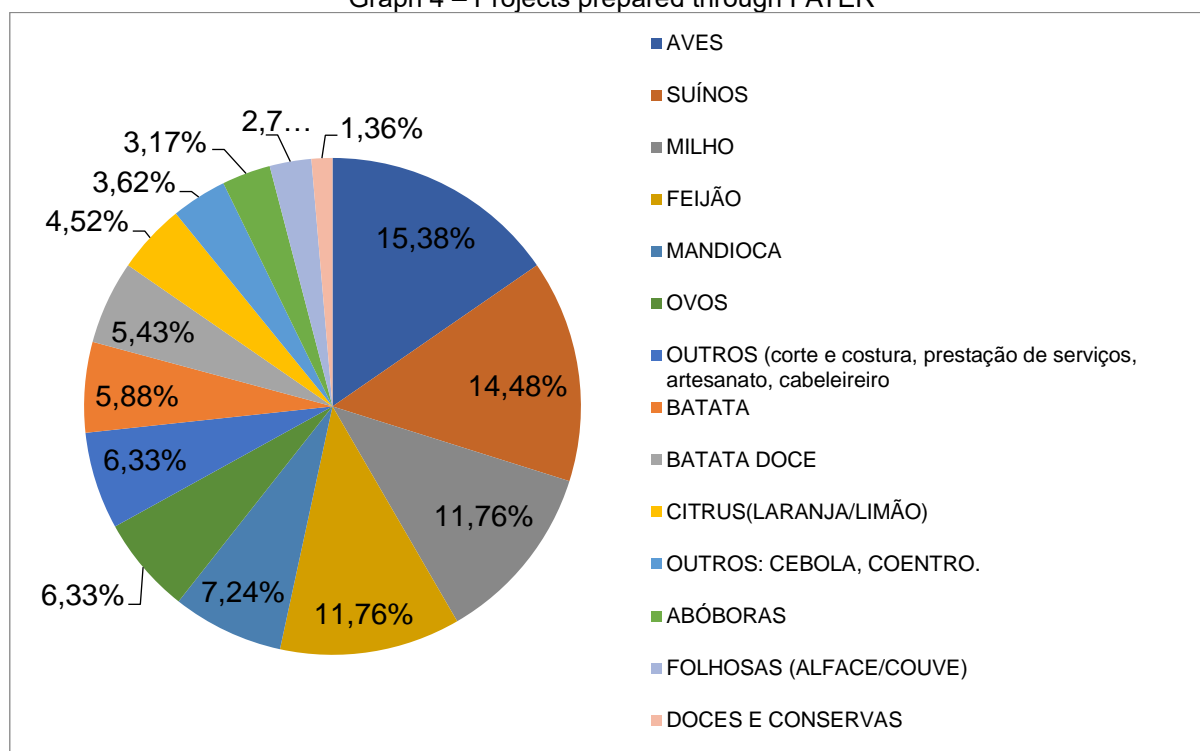
This finding is in line with the perception manifested by the executing professionals that the orientation of the program strengthens women in gender relations in the rural environment, where the patriarchal culture imposes imbalances recognized by sociology. In these terms, Favero (2011) considers that income transfer policies alter the trajectory of family members, in terms of infrastructure and the very way of organizing the house and the life of family farmers. It highlights the fact that this policy highlights the protagonism of women, making them more participative, through the expansion of their network of relationships that give them greater visibility in the public and private spheres.

It must be considered that there was also the release of resources from productive projects for a significant number of men, in the condition of widowers, singles, custodians of children who, in this condition, were holders of the BF. In some circumstances, due to the lack of an identity card, an individual certificate or joint ownership of the wife or partner in the DAP, the MDS security and data crossing system also released resources from the productive projects in the name of the man. In the latter case, the greatest difficulties and noise occurred, given the initial signal that the resources of the productive projects would be released in the name of the woman. This situation of frustration of expectation, whenever legally possible before the control body, was corrected by the MDS when the second installment of the production project was released.

The diversity of the projects prepared is great, and in many cases, even considering the restriction of the value, they are composed of two and even three activities per UPF. In *Graph 4*, which presents the profile of the productive projects developed with the families of Caxias/MA, it is possible to perceive this diversity that reaches 14 different agricultural and non-agricultural activities in this region alone, with emphasis on poultry, pig farming, corn and beans that represent more than 53.38% of the set of projects. These data reinforce the perception that the mastery of processes of multiplication of plant species and the

reproduction of small animals are common strategies of resistance of these families, whether as a source of food or income generation from the commercialization of small surpluses. Here we reaffirm again the perception that the mastery of processes of multiplication of plant species and the reproduction of small animals are common strategies of resistance of these families, whether as a source of food or income generation from the commercialization of small surpluses.

Graph 4 – Projects prepared through PATER



Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the GRAPAS field research (2015).

The reflection carried out by Wagner (2010, p. 88) helps to understand the complex and dynamic relationship of families with the surrounding environment that results from the interactions/interventions between man and nature. For this author, "the types of agriculture that are established, as well as the productive systems that are implemented, take on different forms in time and space and are the result of their own history". Thus, to know the objectives established by these families, it is necessary to know, to establish relationships with the past.

The possibilities, as well as the restrictions and challenges of the cultivation and breeding systems developed in a given region, are not only related to physical and climatic conditions, but mainly to the logic of reproduction implemented by the family nucleus. The understanding of the family as the center of organization of the productive system acquires significant importance to the extent that the relations between the agrarian dynamics and the process of local and regional development are strengthened. Therefore, production and the consequent generation of income are associated with cultural characteristics of a certain group and the environmental conditions of the space where it lives, works and reproduces. Realizing that the



culture and history of social groups are related to an appreciation of local and traditional knowledge is essential for understanding the form of organization of the productive system implemented (WAGNER, 2010, P. 88-89).

Regarding the question about how many families started to develop some non-agricultural activity, from the involvement with PATER, a relative number answered affirmatively. As the data in Graph 4 illustrate, non-agricultural activities with potential for income generation, such as cutting and sewing, provision of services, handicrafts, hairdressing and agroindustry, represent 7.24% of the projects prepared.

This dimension is in line with the warning made by Schneider (2003), that rural pluriactivity needs, in order to express itself, a dynamic environment that allows the combination of agricultural and non-agricultural activities, and that in environments without this potentiality, the expressions of non-agricultural activities will be insignificant. By dynamic environment we mean expressive economic centers, with enterprises that guarantee a regular supply of work spaces, which allows in their surroundings to constitute a corollary of direct and complementary activities and services, exactly the condition absent in most small rural municipalities. What Silva (2010) called the hard core of extreme poverty, particularly referring to the grotesques of northeastern Brazil.

Gazolla and Schneider (2007) consider that production for self-consumption allows families to acquire greater autonomy in the face of the surrounding socioeconomic context, reducing dependence on products that suffer price fluctuations, thus ensuring, through the production obtained by the farmer himself and his family, the main dimensions of food security<sup>9</sup>. It is in this context that, as illustrated by the data in *Table 5*, of the 39 families that make up the sample cut of this evaluation, 27, that is, 69.23%, declared that they produced food for domestic consumption and 12, that is, 30.77%, carried out some type of commercialization. Such information reflects the limits and potentialities faced by the productive projects developed, often restricted to the possibilities of the surrounding market, the scarcity of land area and available labor and the mobility of families that, in their dynamics, often seek corporate relations of access to land and more satisfactory production at the end of the harvests.

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<sup>9</sup>According to Article 3 of the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security (LOSAN), Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) comprises the realization of everyone's right to regular and permanent access to quality food, in sufficient quantity, without compromising access to other essential needs, based on health-promoting food practices that respect cultural diversity and are environmental, culturally, economically and socially sustainable (BRASIL, 2006, p.1).

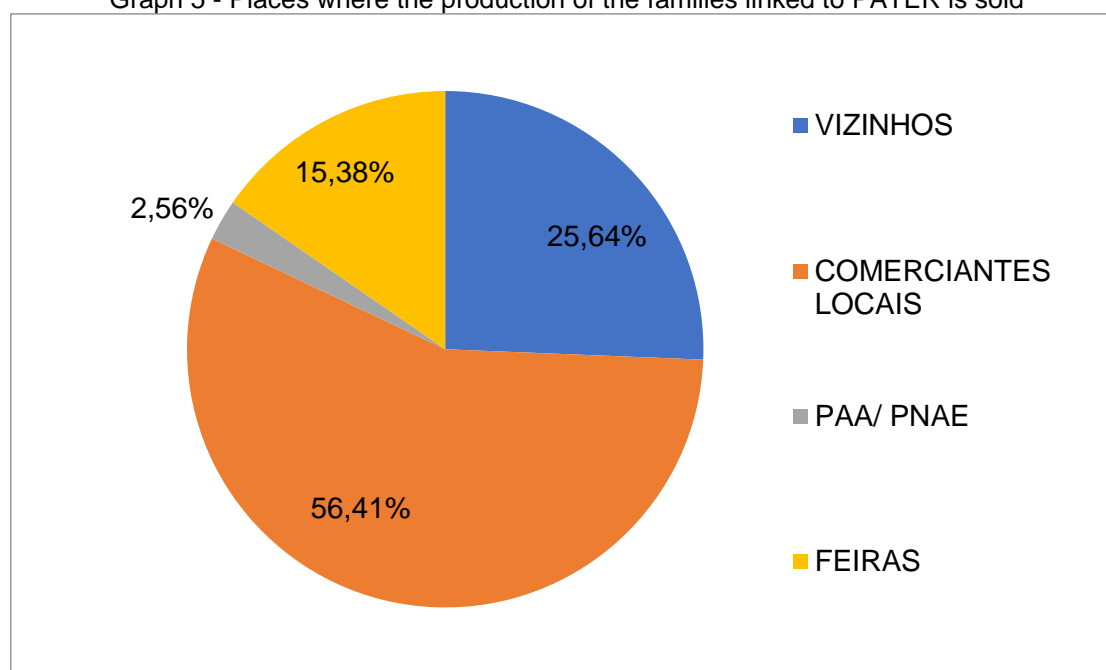
Table 5 – Destination of the production of PATER beneficiaries

Destino da produção	Participantes do projeto	
	(Nº)	(%)
Consumo doméstico	27	69,23
Comercialização	12	30,77
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the GRAPAS field research (2015).

The data in *Graph 5* identify the places where the production of the families linked to the PATER is sold. The main marketing channel for 56.41% of the families is local traders, followed by neighbors, where 25.64% of the families report selling parts of their production. Sales at fairs were carried out by 15.38% of the families and for PAA or PNAE, by 2.56% of the families in the sample. More than a quarter of these families declared that they trade with more than one source. This statistic highlights the difficulties of organization and articulation of logistics of these families who, as a rule, are located at the tip of the communities farthest from the municipalities; the need to strengthen associative and cooperative networks and to connect with access to institutional markets.

Graph 5 - Places where the production of the families linked to PATER is sold



Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the GRAPAS field research (2015).

Another relevant aspect of PATER concerns the performance of ATER professionals, in the face of the reality of social vulnerability encountered. For Schröder and Camboim (2015), it has advanced beyond the productive aspects, assuming mediation roles with a view to including these families in other social policies, establishing strategic partnerships

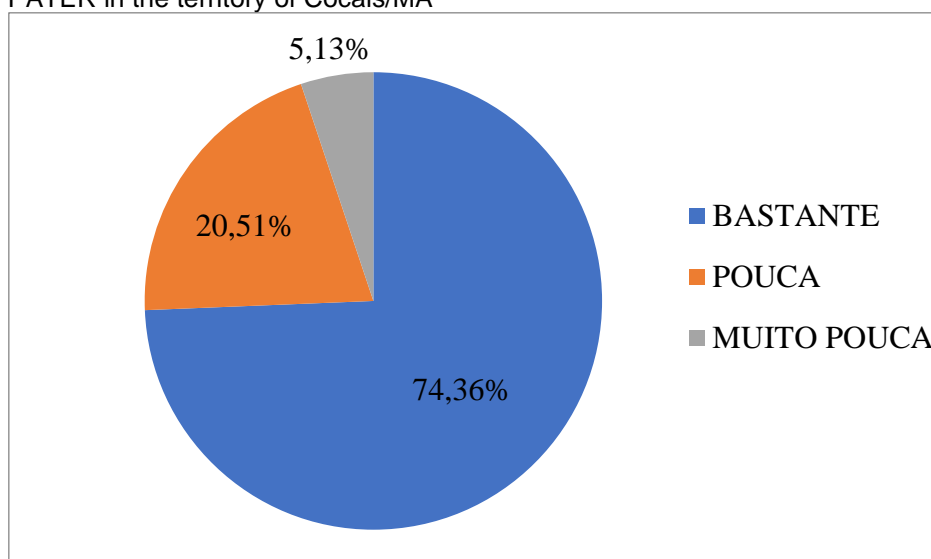


with local agents beyond those that make up the 'productive universe'. The authors highlight that this perceived dimension was greater when associated with the composition of multidisciplinary teams and work methodologies not centered exclusively on productivist approaches.

The performance of rural extension tended to feed a generalized process of information circulation and consequently to broaden the horizon of possibilities for the family, which, recurrently, was unaware of the existence of various government actions from which they could benefit to overcome their condition of poverty. (SCHRÖDER; CAMBOIM, 2015, p. 13).

In this sense, the data in *Graph 6* illustrate the dimension of improvements that occurred in the quality of life of PATER participants. As can be seen, 74.36% of the families indicated that the improvements were quite a lot; 20.51% that were few and 5.13% that were very few.

Graph 6 – Dimension of the improvements that occurred according to the indication of the families participating in PATER in the territory of Cocais/MA



Source: From the author (2017).

Interpreting the reading that families make of their reality is not an easy task. Are the percentages achieved significant, are they many or are they few for the operational cut considered to be two and a half years? The realism of families that are in a situation of greater vulnerability often does not allow an analytical cut of the specific actions developed by a given program, in view of the greater dimension of needs experienced. Bearing this consideration in mind, the answer to the question about the improvements that occurred in the quality of life of the PATER participants can be considered very significant, high for the time frame considered, since more than two thirds of the families considered the improvements that occurred in the period as "quite a lot".



Following the previous question, the families indicated in which areas the perceived improvements occurred. The data in *Table 6* show that for 87.17% of the families there were improvements in food, for 74.35% there was an improvement in income, for 33.33% in health and for 28.20% in education. For 15.38% there would also have been a noticeable improvement in family relationships and for 28.20% in relationships with other people. It is inferred that the improvement in health identified is related to the set of training events and exchange of experiences, promoted by the entity with the municipal government, resulting from the appropriation and adoption by these families of fundamentals of nutrition, prevention and basic sanitation. Regarding the improvement in educational performance, it is important to realize that these families had already been complying with the attendance conditionalities established for school-age children and young people. Possibly, PATER encouraged these families to pay greater attention to this requirement, which would explain this improvement in more than a quarter of the families.

Table 6 - Improvements and expansion of the participation indicated by the families throughout the PATER, compared to two and a half years ago

Melhorias	Nº UPF	% UPF	Participação	NºUPF	% UPF
Na alimentação	34	87,17	Grupo	7	17,94
Na renda	29	74,35	Associação	2	5,12
Na saúde	13	33,33	Sindicato	11	28,20
Na educação	11	28,20	Comunidade	4	10,25
No relacionamento com outras pessoas	11	28,20	Igreja	4	10,25
No relacionamento familiar	6	15,38			

Source: From the author (2017).

When questioned about the participation of any family member in organizations, compared to two and a half years before, a significant increase in participation in groups was indicated (17.94%), and 20.50% of the families interviewed indicated an increase in the participation of the community and the church. The data in *Table 6* also show that 28.20% indicated an increase in participation in union structures. The movement of expansion of participation verified in this period reaffirms in a certain way the strength and limits of these structures indicated in the initial diagnosis carried out with these families, explaining the low presence in representation and cooperative structures, possibly due to the monthly/annual cost of access.

Helfand and Pereira (2012), when working on the determinants of rural poverty and its implications for public policies in Brazil, highlight transaction costs and market participation as one of the obstacles to the success of small producers, considering that



these costs tend to be higher due to the size of their operations, their geographical dispersion and the limited availability of guarantees, among others, when compared to larger establishments. They indicate that such costs increase the "probability of observing low-productivity subsistence agriculture" and that collective action, whether through cooperatives, associations or local organizations, constitute strategies to achieve greater scale, reduce costs, and increase bargaining power.

The evaluation of the degree of satisfaction of the families in participating in the project indicated that 53.85% declared themselves very satisfied, 43.59% declared themselves satisfied and 2.56% declared themselves somewhat satisfied, as can be seen in *Table 7*. Similar answers were given by families about their self-confidence, where 56.41% indicated that it increased a lot, 41.03% that it increased a little and 2.56% that remained the same.

Table 7 - Degree of satisfaction in participating in PATER and level of self-confidence of the families at the end of the execution

<b>Grau de satisfação</b>	<b>Nº UPF</b>	<b>% UPF</b>	<b>Nível de autoconfiança</b>	<b>NºUPF</b>	<b>% UPF</b>
Muito satisfeita	21	53,85	Aumentou bastante	22	56,41
Satisfeita	17	43,59	Aumentou um pouco	16	41,03
Pouco satisfeita	1	2,56	Ficou igual	1	2,56
Nada satisfeita	0	0	Diminuiu	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: From the author (2017).

When considering the data in *Table 6*, which indicate that there was an increase in sociability through the improvement of the internal relationship of 15.38% of the families and in the relationship with other people for 28.20% of the families, in addition to improvements in income and food security, with the satisfaction data presented in *Table 7*, in which the aggregate data indicate that 97.44% of the families are satisfied, the dimension of the work developed over only two and a half years is perceived. Based on these indicators, it can be perfectly concluded that this Public Policy has produced concrete results in the material, social and cultural conditions of these families, focusing on the perspective of citizenship, a task that is considered difficult, as it comes up against the perverse legacy of persistent and naturalized poverty, in an unequal society. These indicators of expansion of autonomy and protagonism signal the importance of this journey, of the deepening of the organization and resistance practices of these families in the search for the advancement of public policies that approach, resolutely, the structural causes that generate social exclusion.



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

PATER has had a significant impact on food security, with notable improvements in household feeding. More than half of the families involved reported an increase in income, mainly through the production of small animals, corn, and beans. About 31% of families sell part of their production, strengthening economic and social ties in the community. Most of the productive projects developed demonstrated a high capacity for continuity and sustainability.

Ownership of productive projects has often been attributed to women, strengthening their position in gender relations and increasing their participation in social networks. The citizenship of families was expanded, with 97.44% expressing satisfaction with the program. Most families indicated improvements in health, family and social relationships, and overall quality of life.

Despite the advances, integration with other municipal public policies was limited, indicating the need for greater engagement of local government. The lack of continuity of the program after the first phase represents a challenge, with the risk of reversing the gains obtained. The absence of new public calls since the 2016 coup d'état compromises the maintenance of ATER services.

The continuity of PATER is crucial to sustain the progress achieved. The lack of funding and new public calls affects the ability of extension workers to continue serving families, many of whom may return to a condition of vulnerability. Integration with land regularization, agrarian reform, land credit, and PRONAF B policies, as well as with ministries of health, housing, education, and agriculture, is essential to promote the sustainability of projects.

It is necessary to expand social participation, involving the community in the management and control of policies. Actions that encourage municipal public authorities to assume a more purposeful engagement in the search for strategies to overcome local blockades are essential.

Encouraging more proactive municipal actions to overcome local lockdowns and facilitate policy integration is crucial. Inter-institutional articulation, connecting PATER with other government initiatives, is fundamental for the continued success of the program.

The Brazilian social, political and economic conjuncture, marked by neoliberal retractions and influences, represents a challenge for the continuity of policies to combat poverty. Poverty management is often welfare-based, and the lack of economic dynamism limits the applicability of standard solutions. The dependence on the actions of the other



spheres of government is evident, and the fiscal crisis of the regional municipalities limits local action.

PATER has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing extreme rural poverty in Caxias/MA, improving food security, generating income and expanding citizenship. However, the continuity and deepening of the program are essential to sustain the advances achieved. Integration with municipal policies and the expansion of social participation are crucial to the continued success of PATER. The research suggests the importance of understanding the causes of the mutual distance between families and social movements in the countryside, as well as the perspective of young people who live in this reality in the face of the perceived limits to their strategy of social reproduction.



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